IN THE CLAIMS:

Presented below is a listing and status of all of the claims in the present application:

1. - 35. (canceled).

36. (new) An information reproducing apparatus comprising:

a light source for generating linearly polarized light;

a medium having a linear mark;

an optical head disposed between the light source and the medium, the optical head having a fine aperture;

polarized light control means for controlling the linearly polarized light generated by the light source to pass through the fine aperture of the optical head to generate near-field light having a preselected polarization direction and to irradiate the linear mark of the medium with the near-field light so that the preselected polarization direction of the near-field light is orthogonal to a longitudinal axis of the linear mark; and

a detector for detecting light scattered by the linear mark irradiated with the near-field light.

37. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 36; further comprising signal processing means for processing a signal from the detector corresponding to the detected scattered light.

38. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 37; wherein the signal processing means includes means for acquiring data in accordance with an intensity of the signal from the detector corresponding to the detected scattered light.

39. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 36; wherein the linear mark comprises a linear data mark.

40. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 36; wherein the linear mark comprises a linear tracking mark.

41. (new) An information reproducing apparatus comprising:

a light source for generating linearly polarized light;

a medium having a plurality of linear marks extending in different directions from one another;

an optical head disposed between the light source and the medium, the optical head having a fine aperture;

polarized light control means for controlling the linearly polarized light generated by the light source to pass through the fine aperture of the optical head to generate near-field light and to irradiate the linear marks of the medium with the near-field light; and

a detector for detecting light scattered by the linear marks irradiated with the near-field light.

42. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 41; further comprising signal processing means for processing a signal from the detector corresponding to the detected scattered light and for acquiring multiple value data from the signal.

43. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 41; wherein the linear marks comprise linear data marks.

44. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 41; wherein the linear marks comprise linear tracking marks.

45. (new) An information reproducing apparatus comprising:

a medium having at least one linear mark;

an optical head disposed over the medium and having a fine aperture; and

light generating means for generating linearly polarized light, directing the linearly polarized light through the fine aperture of the optical head to generate near-field light and to irradiate the at least one linear mark of the medium with the near-field light, and controlling a direction of polarization of the near-field light so that the direction of polarization of the near-field light irradiated on the at least one linear mark is orthogonal to a longitudinal axis of the at least one linear mark; and

detecting means for detecting light scattered by the linear mark irradiated with the near-field light.

46. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 45; further comprising signal processing means for processing a signal from the detector corresponding to an intensity of the detected scattered light.

47. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 45; wherein the at least one linear mark comprises at least one linear data mark.

48. (new) An information reproducing apparatus according to claim 45; wherein the at least one linear mark comprises at least one linear tracking mark.

49. (new) An information reproducing method, comprising the steps of:

providing a medium having a linear mark;

generating near-field light by directing linearly polarized light through a fine aperture of an optical head;

irradiating the linear mark of the medium with the near-field light while controlling a direction of polarization of the near-field light so that the direction of polarization of the near-field light irradiated on the linear mark is orthogonal to a longitudinal axis of the linear mark; and

detecting light scattered by the linear mark irradiated with the near-field light.

50. (new) An information reproducing method according to claim 49; further comprising the step of processing a signal corresponding to an intensity of the detected scattered light.

51. (new) An information reproducing method according to claim 49; wherein the linear mark comprises a linear data mark.

52. (new) An information reproducing method according to claim 49; wherein the linear mark comprises a linear tracking mark.